FREE!

MMOZine

Issue 21 | June 2010

Free Magazine For MMO Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates

PREVIEW

APB

We've played it! First impressions of this stunning new MMO

REVIEW

RUNES OF MAGIC

OUR OPINION ON THIS NEW UPDATE

PLUS AION 1.9 + NEED FOR SPEED WORLD + WORLD OF TANKS + MINER WARS

+ PREVIEWED

World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

This major update is nearly here!

+ INTERVIEW

TLBB

We chat to the developers

+ REVIEWED

EVE Online: Tyrannis

Space, the final frontier?

Welcome to MMOZine

Much as Doctor Who occasionally has to regenerate, then so does the magazine editor. Like the good Doctor though, the face may change, but the personality remains (roughly) the same.

That poor analogy is basically to introduce me as the new editor of MMOZine. Hello! But things in the good ship MMOZine will continue on its steady course, as we continue to bring you the latest information, previews and reviews on the MMO games that really matter.

This month we've got reviews of the latest Runes of Magic and EVE expansions, along with closer looks at APB, World of Tanks and an in-depth interview with the developers of the latest hit MMO from China, TLBB. Enjoy!

Dean Mortlock, Editor
mmozine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

The MMOZine massive were told to go forth and multiplay, which they did…

STEVE HILL
Is APB the most mainstream MMO yet? Steve thinks so.

LESLEY SMITH
WoW expert Lesley has spent this month drooling over Cataclysm.

RICHIE SHOEMAKER
Fear not, loyal reader as Richie still writes for us.

DON'T MISS!

This month's highlights…

RUNES OF MAGIC: CHAPTER III – THE ELDER KINGDOMS

The latest, and best, update is here

APB

World of Tanks

TLBB

A game from over there doing very well over here

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

Miner Wars
Slage
Need for Speed World
Faxion Online
Xyson
Aion 2.0
Guild Wars 2
EverQuest II
Aika: Ashes of Betrayal
APB
Star Trek Online: Season Two
World of Warcraft: Cataclysm
World of Tanks
TLBB
Runes of Magic: Chapter III – The Elder Kingdoms
EVE Online: Tyrannis
Aion 1.9

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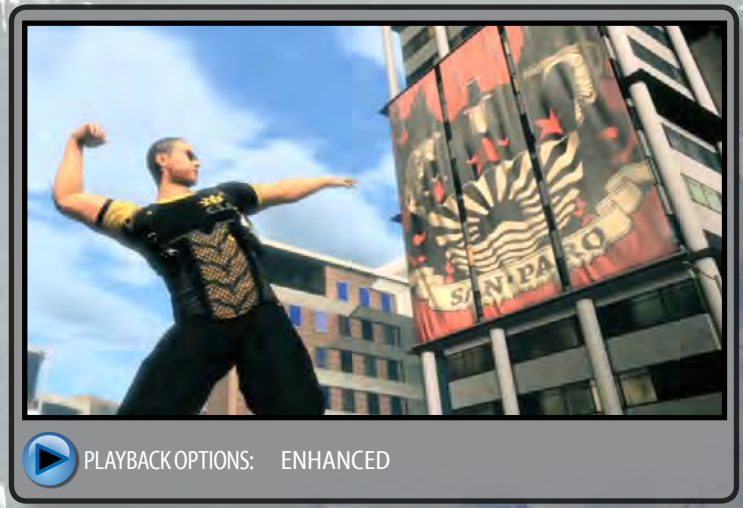
Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.

"A CITY IS MADE OF ITS PEOPLE;
YOU ARE THOSE PEOPLE"



PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

www.APB.com

OUT JULY 2ND

18
www.pegi.info

PC DVD ROM

realtime worlds

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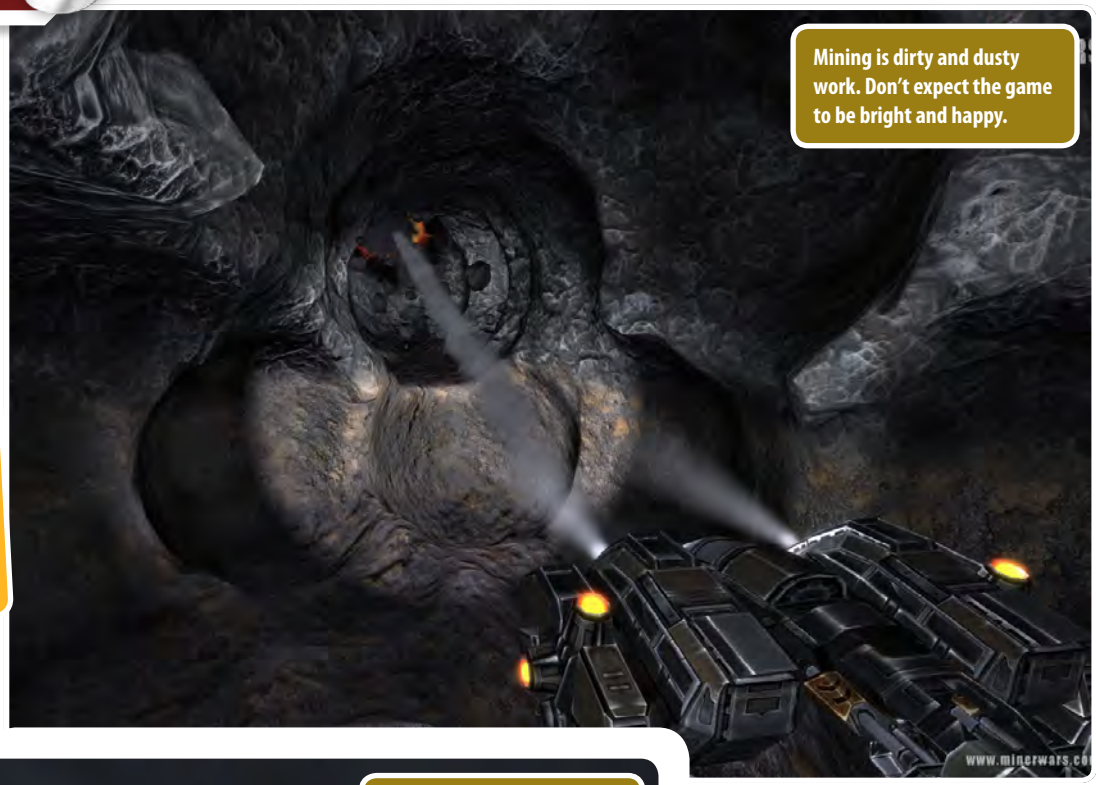
Miner Wars

FIRST LOOK

MINER WARS

Publisher: TBD
Developer: Keen Software
Heritage: None
Link: www.minerwars.com
ETA: 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Miner Wars



Mining is dirty and dusty work. Don't expect the game to be bright and happy.

Hey you, the rocksteady crew

What's the story?

30 years ago, mining was one of the most exciting things you could be doing in a videogame. Today, thanks to EVE and other MMOGs, it's one of the most tedious activities you can ever hope to engage in. Why did things go so badly wrong? Nobody really knows, but by investing their efforts in reanimating the spirit of Asteroids and Descent, community developer Keen Software are planning to put things right and make mining cool again.

What do we know?

The game is an intriguing combination of action combat, fleet management and exploration, set in a universe where asteroids are fully destructible and the limits of the space are apparently boundless. Although we're sceptical on the size and scalability of the physical space in the game, the way in which you can bore tunnels in asteroids to carve out bases and suck up over 50 types of ore is very impressive. The developers claim that 300 pilots can fight over single sectors, which may not seem as massively multiplayer as many other games, but with mining gangs a good deal smaller even in EVE and with a single-player dynamic campaign as part of the package, it's hard not to get more than a little excited.

When do we get more?

New in-game footage appears every couple of weeks, with community updates sent out every few days. With a Beta close at hand, the summer is going to be a busy time for the developers, although until we get out hands on it we're not going to know how substantial many of the features are.

Only a dozen or so pilotable ships are planned for launch, with more to follow.

Base ships will manage your mining operations.

AION

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

A WORLD DIVIDED. A JOURNEY UNCHARTED.

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AION NCSOFT

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Slage

FIRST LOOK

Don't ask. Seriously. Don't ask

Publisher: Ankama
Developer: Ankama
Heritage: Dofus, Wakfu, Dofus Arena
Link: www.ankama.com
ETA: TBA

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Slage

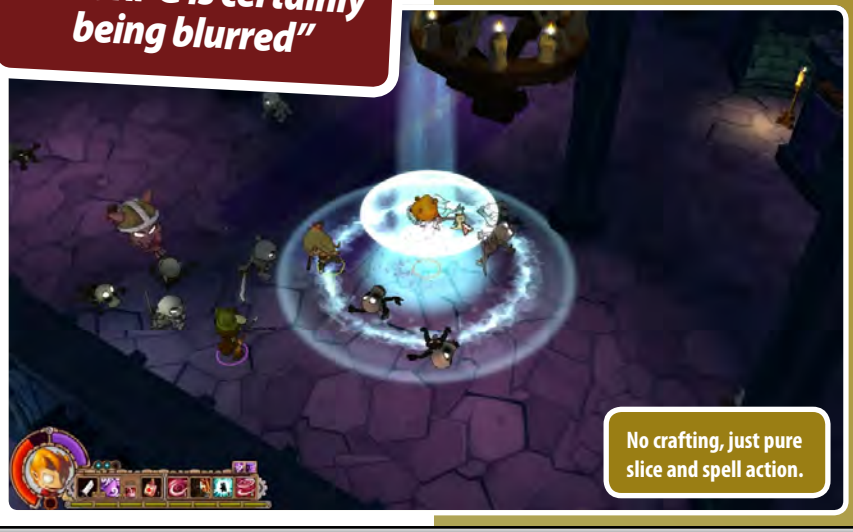
What's the story?

Set in the same universe as Wakfu – which is in closed Beta testing – and set in the same universe as the charming family-friendly Dofus, Slage is an online hack-'n'-slash game that, for the first time, sees the series in fetching 3D. As to what a Slage is, we have no idea. We suspect French developer Ankama like making up five-letter nonsense words. Expect them to announce Flarp in 2012. Maybe.

What do we know?

Lazy commentators with limited preview space might suggest Slage as a kind of modern-day Gauntlet with Torchlight visuals, but they would also have to add that in spite of the cartoon gloss, the action is frenetic and very bloody. They might also forget that although it's a four-player action game, there are plans for a very deep and detailed hub through which the entire community can get together and attempt to take on the various levels and enemy characters, using the exact same classes as in the MMOGs. The line between achievement-rich online action and MMORPG is certainly being blurred

"The line between achievement-rich online action and MMORPG is certainly being blurred"



When do we get more?

It's fair to say that Ankama are not a developer to rush through things. Asking for a release date for the English edition of Wakfu elicits a non-committal shrug and mention of an open Beta. Slage however has been developed with all markets in mind, and is looking pretty advanced for a game that has been under wraps. With Ankama starting to look beyond its home territory, we can certainly expect to see more of the game in the coming months.

ALLODS
ONLINE
Most Anticipated MMO In 2009
КРИ 2009 ЛУЧШАЯ ИГРА
КРИ 2009 ПРИЗ ЗРИТЕЛЬСКИХ СИМПАТИЙ
PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED
ATTACK, DEFEND, LOOT
OR PLUNDER! SET SAIL INTO THE
ASTRAL WITH ALLODS ONLINE
Step 1. Register at allods.gPotato.eu
Step 2. Download the game client
Step 3. Install and patch the game to the latest version
Step 4. Log in with your gPotato.eu username and password
gPotato
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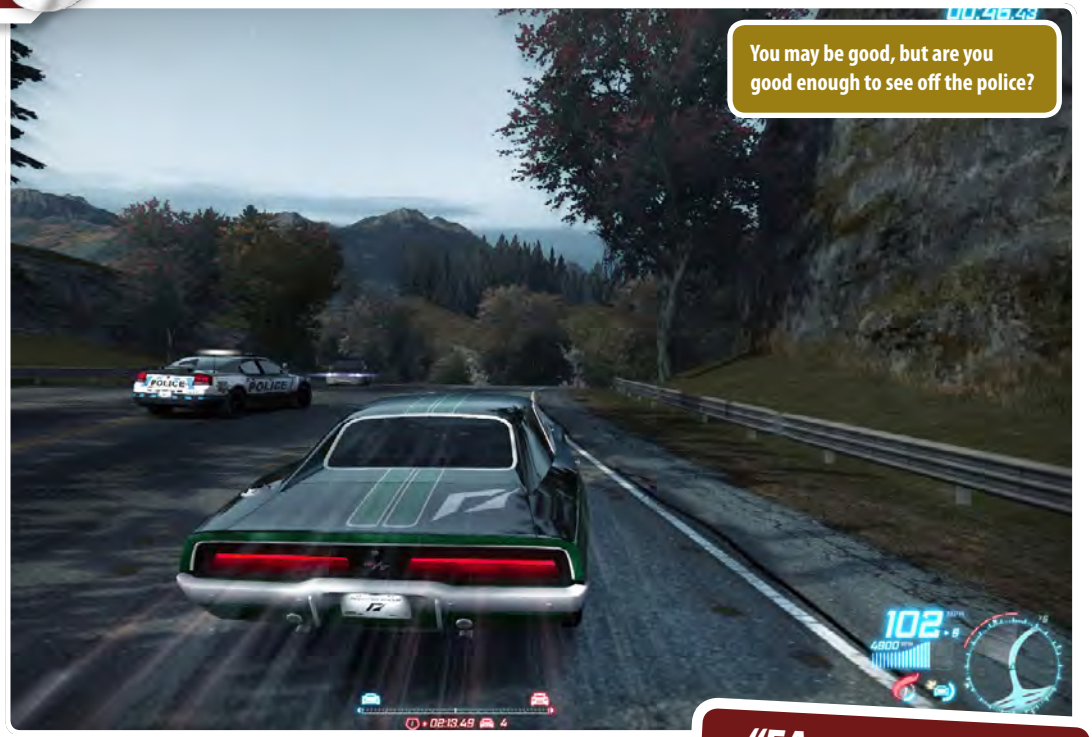
Publisher: EA
Developer: EA Black Box
Heritage: Need for Speed series, Skate series
Link: http://world.needforspeed.com
ETA: Q2 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Need for Speed World



"EA are promising the most detailed car customisation engine ever seen"

Need for Speed World

FIRST LOOK

The World in motion

What's the story?

Where can you take a franchise that's been around since almost the dawn of home computing? A franchise that's seemingly covered every possible gameplay style? Easy, you turn it into an MMO.

Need for Speed World isn't the first driving game to go online – pretty much every racer released over the past few years will let you do that – but it is the first one to blur the boundaries between genres like never before. The gameplay mimics that of both Most Wanted and Carbon (and even includes their relevant cities to drive in – Rockport and Palmont, respectively), so you're looking at a plethora of illegal races and police chases to get involved in. There's co-op and team-based play too, so you can join up with the police to take down a band of illegal drivers.

What do we know?

Well, we know that it's going to be a free download for starters. But, as we all know, you rarely get anything for free, so EA are looking into selling pre-paid games cards through retailers to give the player new cars, tracks, etc.

As for the game itself, you can look forward to racing against either your mates or (hopefully) a massive online community in a huge NFS world. You'll be able to develop your driver character by racing either solo or multiplayer, and EA are promising not only new race modes but also the most detailed car customisation engine ever seen.

When do we get more?

Need for Speed World is currently in closed Beta stage, but should be available to download this July. Look out for a review of the game in our next issue.

FREE TO PLAY

TLBB

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7 UP

New MMOs and content updates to mark on your calendar with a BIG RED PEN!

Faxion Online

Developer: UTV True Games | **ETA:** TBA

Any new MMO is big news, and UTV True Games' Faxion Online is, on paper, looking very impressive so far. It deals with the usual topic of good versus evil, but it's the game's lighter tone that makes sure that Faxion puts an irreverent (and welcome) twist on the Heaven versus Hell formula. More soon.

Star Trek Online: Season Two

Developer: Cryptic Studios | **ETA:** Out now

While few were overly impressed with Cryptic Studios' first stab at the Star Trek universe, they're readying the first update, Season Two, which they're hoping will fix a lot of the perceived problems with the game. Season Two will include new mini-games, missions for both the Federation and the Klingons, ship interiors, a higher level cap – which will now go up to Vice Admiral 1, new skills and also more end-game content, too.

EverQuest II

Developer: Sony Online Entertainment

Following Blizzard's lead, SOE have started charging for mounts in EverQuest II. Etheral, Sinister and Ulteran Prowlers can now be bought at the marketplace for 2,500 Station Cash each – which translates to about £20 a pop. Good value for money? Well, if Blizzard's model is anything to go by then they'll sell like hot cakes.

Aika: Ashes of Betrayal

Developer: gPotato | **ETA:** 17th June

Aika players looking for a bit more will be delighted to hear that a new expansion pack, Ashes of Betrayal, has just been announced. You won't have to wait long for it too, as it's got a release date of the 17th of June. The pack contains a new region (Darkrane Forest), plus new equipment and skill improvements starting at level 51.

Guild Wars 2

Developer: NCsoft | **ETA:** TBA

NCsoft have been crowing recently about Guild Wars 2's dynamic events system. Fancy words, but what does it mean? In a nutshell, it promises to make events much more realistic than in a typical MMO – if you pick up a quest saying that an Ogre is attacking your house, then it will, unless you stop it. The world will dynamically change based on actions and decisions made by the players. Sounds good to us.

ON THE RADAR

2011
- Star Wars: The Old Republic

WINTER
- Star Wars: Clone Wars Adventures

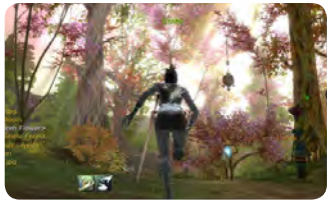
NOVEMBER
- DC Universe Online

AUTUMN
- LEGO Universe

Xyson

Developer: Notorious Games | **ETA:** TBA

Waiting for the release of Xyson? Well, the bad news for you is that it looks like your wait is going to be extended a wee bit. Notorious Games' Jordi Grau Davis recently informed us that the game is now delayed until August – with the possibility of further delays –which has been caused by that most troublesome of bugbears 'unforeseen circumstances'. As soon as we hear of a firm release date, we'll be sure to let you know.



Aion 2.0

Developer: NCsoft | **ETA:** Autumn

Big things are expected of the 2.0 patch for Aion, as it promises not only a new (and vast) land called Baluarea to explore, but new weapons, a brand new pet system and a higher level cap. This could be just the boost the game needs to keep its fans.

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APB

Publisher: EA
Developer: Realtime Worlds
Heritage: Crackdown
Link: www.apb.com
ETA: Summer 2010

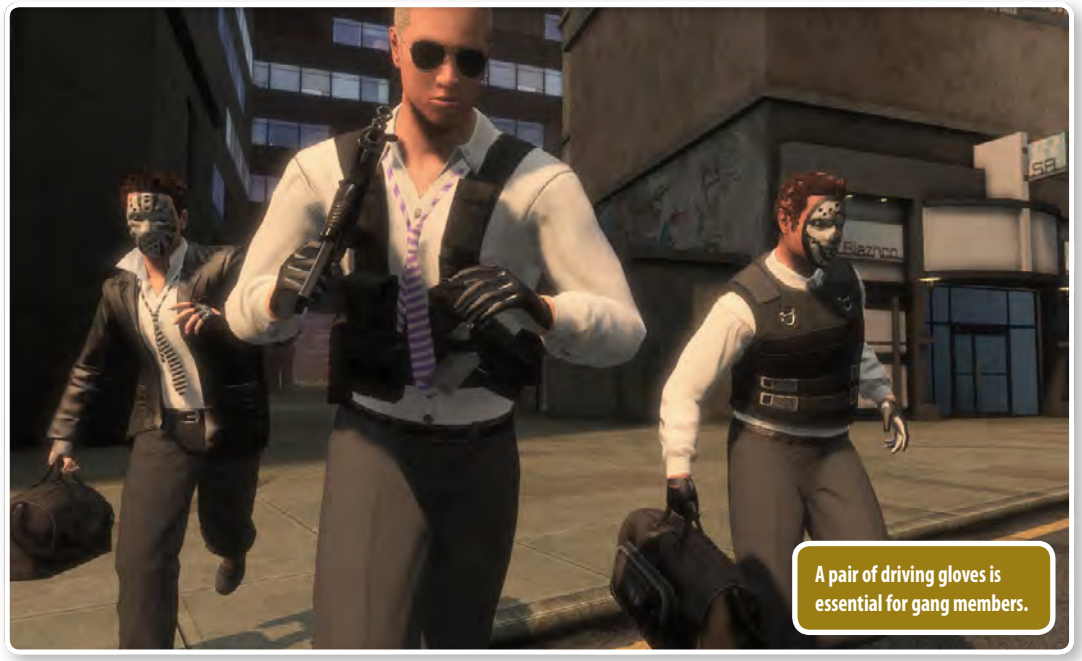
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of APB

We predict a riot

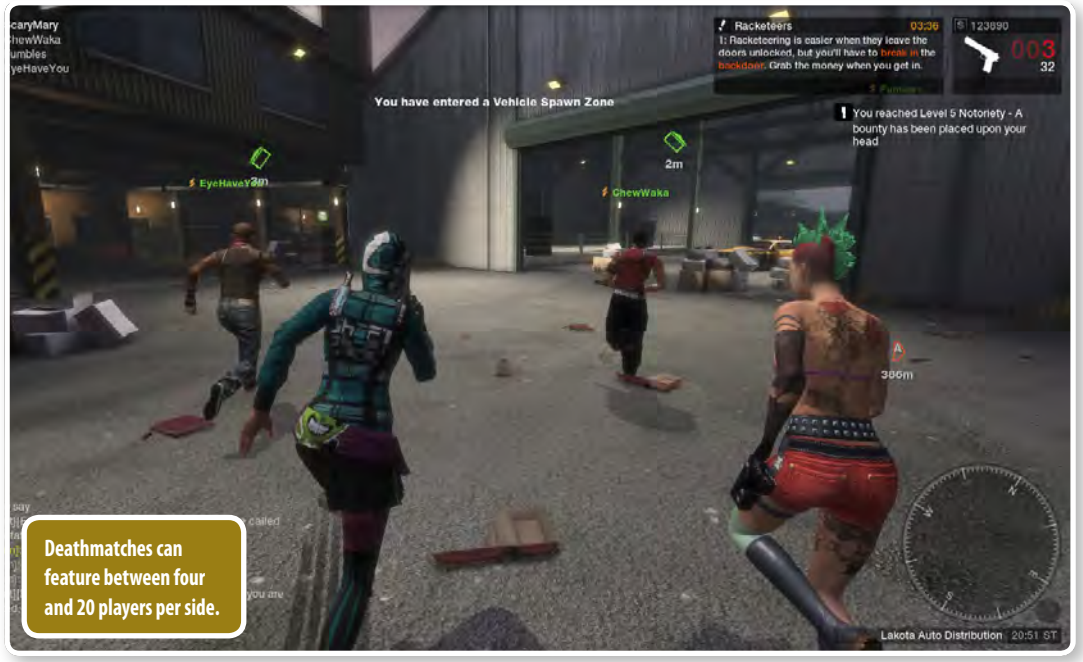
Hanging out the window of a speeding car and toting a machine gun, it's hard to envisage a game further removed from the traditional tenets of the MMO. Purists and wizards may scoff, but APB looks set to be a refreshing addition to the online space, despite perhaps sitting uneasily alongside more conventional rat-catching affairs. The game is the brainchild of Dave Jones, the man who will forever be described as the creator of GTA. More recently, he was behind the console-only Crackdown, and his apparent lifetime obsession with open-world ultra-violent cities is set to continue with APB. Given the choice of factions – Criminal or Enforcers – it has already been described somewhat simplistically as online cops 'n' robbers.

Cop killer

Despite clearly being a massively multiplayer online game, Realtime Worlds are deliberately avoiding the term MMO, primarily because APB is not an RPG. It's a skill-based action game, without recourse to



A pair of driving gloves is essential for gang members.


You have entered a Vehicle Spawn Zone
You reached Level 5 Notoriety - A bounty has been placed upon your head
Racketeers
Lakota Auto Distribution

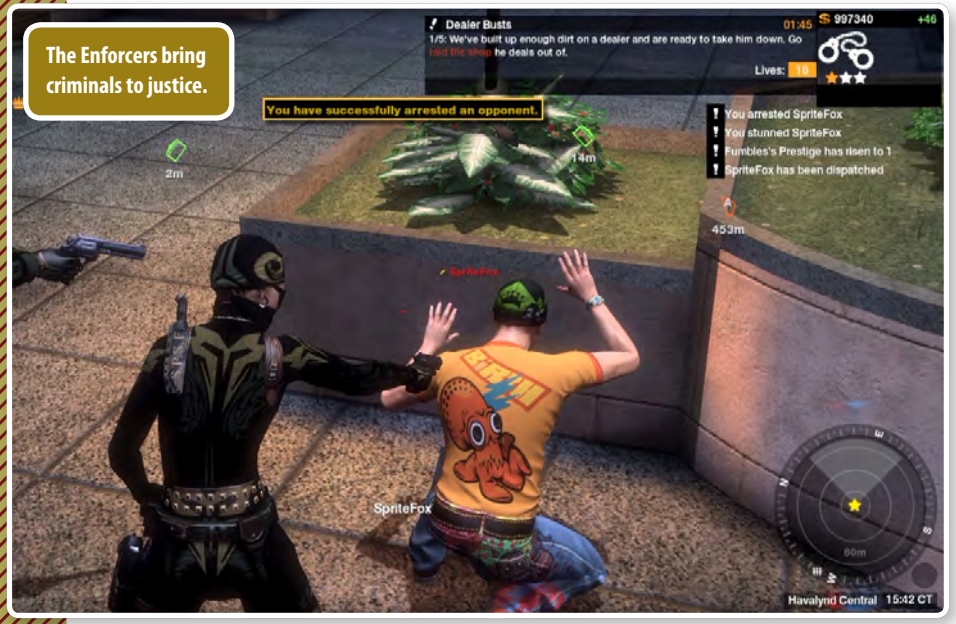
Deathmatches can feature between four and 20 players per side.

CUSTOM MADE

We've created a monster!

APB's customisation options are quite possibly the most advanced seen to date, with millions of variations possible. Tweakable aspects go far beyond your character, and you can design individual logos, your entire wardrobe and the livery of your car. If you've got the creativity and the patience then you might even be able to sell in-game items, thus feasibly paying for your subscription.

Unique paintjobs can be applied to your motor.



The Enforcers bring criminals to justice.

APB continued

arbitrary levels, statistics or abilities. So if you're a Criminal you could find yourself preying on the city of San Paro by mugging pedestrians, robbing shops, flogging stolen cars and generally causing chaos, as well as embarking on more directed missions given by NPCs known as contacts – essentially quest-givers. Working for a contact gives you access to better equipment and they'll give you missions involving things like bombing or burning down buildings.

On the Enforcer side of things, the open-world gameplay revolves more around policing the city, so you'll be patrolling the streets, finding the criminals and catching them in the act. Enforcers also have contacts who will give them missions that involve stopping criminals, researching them, and generally protecting the populous.

However, the objective-based missions are less important than in more traditional MMOs, and are often simply a way of bringing players together in what is at its core a PvP game. A lot of the time the action happens organically, with a complex matchmaking system that will throw together four baddies against four goodies of roughly equal stature in what becomes a rolling series of pseudo-Deathmatch games, generally with one side attempting to achieve an objective and the other side trying to stop them.

For instance, some criminals could be holed up in a building with the Enforcers attempting to storm their way in and smoke them out. If it's across town then you'll need some wheels to get there, and in time-honoured fashion, you can haul a bewildered motorist onto the tarmac and appropriate their vehicle, whichever side you're fighting for. The key thing to consider is that the Enforcers are not really the police;

DISTRICT LINE

San Paro features three distinct areas…

SOCIAL **FINANCIAL** **WATER FRONT**

Hang out, tweak your appearance, dance with strangers.

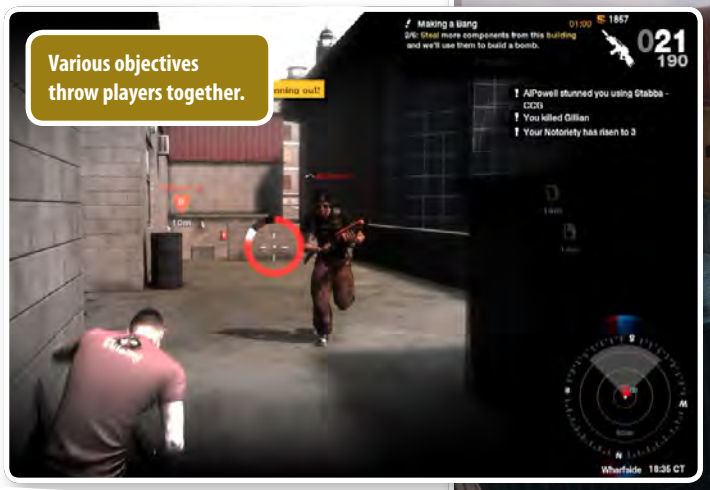
APB continued

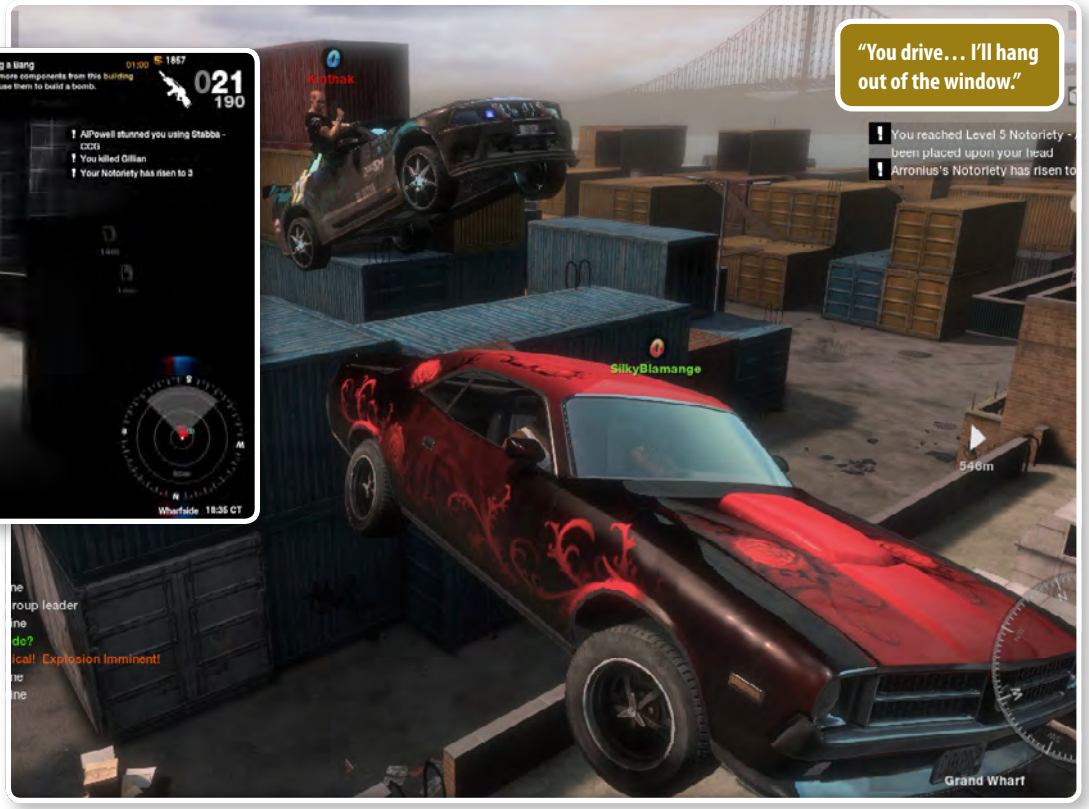
they're more a of a vigilante outfit intent on cleaning up the city using methods not necessarily any less morally dubious than those of the Criminals. The action is rarely less than frantic and VOIP is activated by default, so to get the full experience it may be worth investing in a headset.

Social network

That's not to say there isn't any downtime, and this takes place in the city's social district, where peace has broken out. It's here that the game's extraordinary customisation features become apparent. Spat into the world in jeans and T-shirt, there are literally hundreds of layers of detail. In the social area, characters wander around, chatting and dancing in what initially comes across as a less lascivious version of Second Life. Most are to be found swarming around terminals, each tweaking numerous aspects of their appearance. A bewildering array of options is available, although the results are striking, with the Beta currently littered with some worryingly attractive women – presumably the work of 15-year-old boys. Elsewhere you can customise your vehicle and even create your own death sound, effectively a jingle that plays whenever you slay someone. As you'd expect, a swathe of in-game music is available, and you can also import your own tunes.

APB has been described as a new breed of online game, and it's not hard to see why. A hugely ambitious affair, effectively the tools are in place for the players to determine how the experience ultimately pans out, with potential for a genuine long-running battle for control of the city streets. And while an extensive playtest of the Beta reveals a control system that could arguably be more robust, it's to be hoped that the overall experience eventually matches the ambition of the concept. Either way, APB: All Points Bulletin is a bold attempt to do something different, providing an invigorating urban playground that's mercifully free of Elves, Goblins and Pixies…





"APB has been described as a new breed of online game, and it's not hard to see why"

MMOZine Verdict

An ambitious online evolution of the open-world concept

HOW COMPLETE

90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

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NCSOFT
LINEAGE II TEAM

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World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

Dragons and Goblins and Worgen? Oh my!

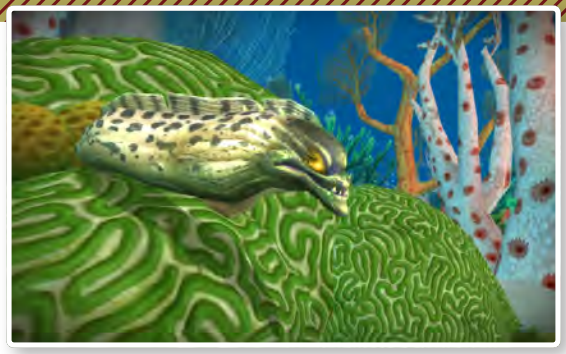
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Heritage: Starcraft, Diablo II, Warcraft III
Link: www.wow-europe.com
ETA: Q3/4 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

With the Blizzard Friends and Family Alpha in full swing and the Beta due to start soon, Cataclysm – the third expansion for World of Warcraft – is firmly on the horizon. Promising the return of the twisted Dragon Aspect now known as Deathwing, Cataclysm doesn't introduce new worlds to wander, instead it goes back to where WoW began, the world of Azeroth, and injects new life into much-loved zones and lore.

But it wouldn't be an expansion without the huge gameworld having its borders widened. Cataclysm promises two new races: Worgen and the Goblins, and both need a home. For the Alliance-sided Worgen, this is the gothic and isolated land of Gilneas, and for the Goblins, who have sided with the Horde, this is the tropical Lost Isles. For the first time, players will also be able to venture into the Elemental Planes and to the previously blocked zone of Mount Hyjal. Finally, Cataclysm also introduces the undersea city of Vashj'ir.

"Cataclysm goes back to the world of Azeroth and injects new life into much-loved zones and lore"



The Lost Isles is a tropical paradise that has attracted both Horde and Alliance.

BEYOND THE GAME

Blizzard has been releasing smartphone apps for a while now, but ahead of Cataclysm they've now released a new service for players who need to do business in Azeroth while away from their computers. World of Warcraft Remote is a new monthly subscription service which allows players to access the in-game Auction House from their iPhones and iPod Touches. It does cost £2.49 a month, mind.

Graphically, WoW is going to change drastically once Cataclysm is released.

Vashj'ir will be the first zone to offer underwater combat.

WoW: Cataclysm cont.

Promising everything from underwater combat to new dungeons and upgraded classic instances, Cataclysm has WoW players on tenterhooks. This is even more the case with the promise of patches 3.3.5 (which introduces the Ruby Sanctum) and 3.9 (which will see the introduction of new race-related lore quests for Gnomes and Trolls). Ruby Sanctum, in particular, features a direct allusion to the changes which will affect Azeroth.

Players have long been demanding the ability to fly in Azeroth, after all mounts can be used in Northrend so why not south of the continent? Lore has never been able to explain this glitch but the physics of the game have. When WoW launched there were no flying mounts and Azeroth was not built to be viewed from the air. Well now a giant, angry black dragon is going to change all that.

Deathwing returns

Deathwing's return is, literally, going to shake Azeroth to its core. Zones will change and settlements will be destroyed, and this provides the perfect opportunity to allow those long-time players to get their wish, as well as revitalising a world with which most players have grown a little too familiar. Even the cities will be getting a new look, and players levelling a new toon will find that the experience and the order of zones will be completely different to the pre-Cataclysm era.

This is not just an excuse to make these tired zones look nicer, as we're talking a huge overhaul with graphics in the forefront. This means new effects, like more realistic water movement, and, of course, a world where you can fly above Ironforge Mountain and not see a half-finished landscape. Cities will be fleshed out, with Stormwind

CHANGING AZEROTH

Azeroth will be changing drastically once Deathwing returns…

SWAMP OF SORROWS | LOOKING GORGEOUS | THE RETURN?

Swamp of Sorrows is still creepy but even more atmospheric.

WoW: Cataclysm cont.

gaining a new quarter for Worgen visitors, and Undercity will now look – at least from above – like it did during the days when it was the Capital City of Lordaeron.

But these changes are also changing the levelling experience. This means you might start in Elwynn Forest but will now take a different path across the Eastern Kingdoms, as former low-level zones become deadly for WoW newbies. This also means a completely new levelling experience, which will make the inevitable re-roll much more pleasant than it has been in past expansions. Cataclysm is also promising new race and class combinations, so Gnomes can finally be Mages, while mighty Tauren get to follow the Light as Paladins. Finally the level cap has been raised to 85.

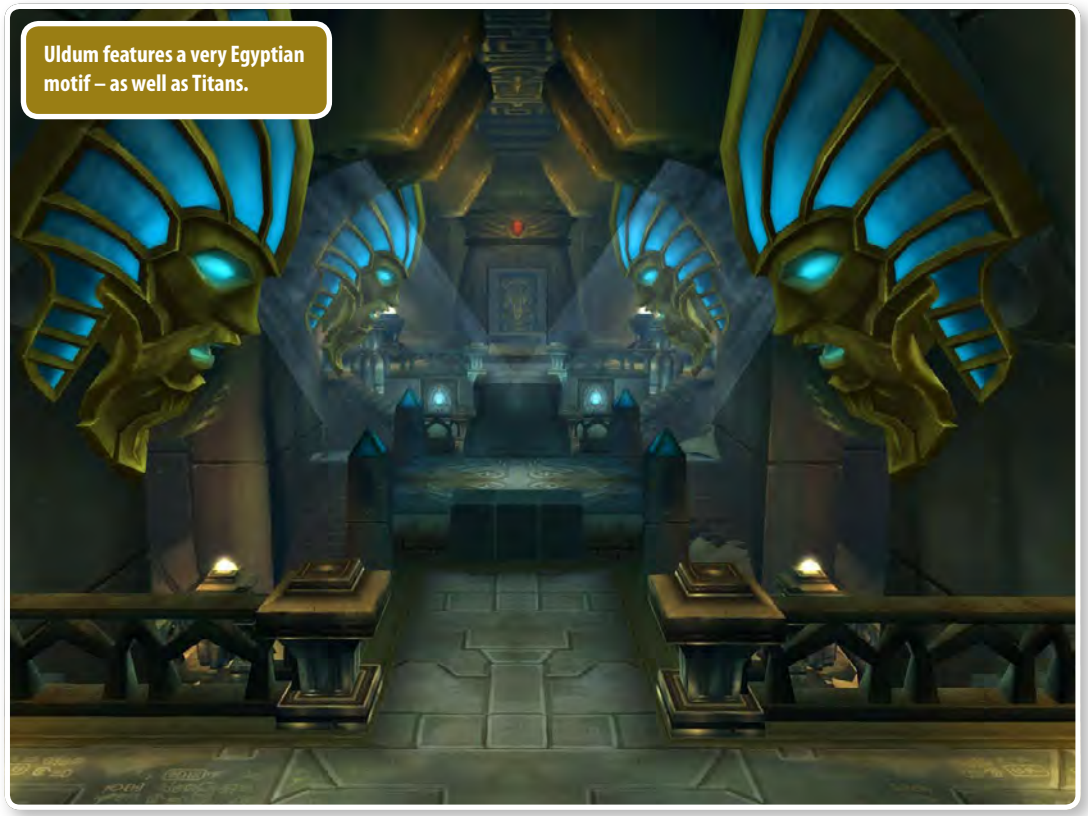
There's going to be more emphasis on guilds with the introduction of a guild levelling system. The more you do with your guild, the better the rewards like reagent-free raid-wide buffs or lower repair costs. So if your guild goes into an instance and gets a legendary or down a big boss, you will get bonuses for it.

Long-time players will also get to see the continuation of WoW rich lore with in-game appearances from important characters. This includes Genn Graymane, king of Gilneas, and Malfurion Stormrage.

As well as Deathwing himself, Cataclysm also sees the return of Ragnaros, one of the classic raid bosses from the vanilla days of Molten Core.

In keeping with the spirit of renewing classic instances – as Blizzard recently did with Onyxia's Lair – Cataclysm is also going to see new heroic five-player modes for Deadmines and Shadowfang Keep. The latter instance is particularly relevant to the Worgen-centric theme in the newest expansion.

From the sneaky peeks offered by Blizzard and a slew of footage which leaked after the Alpha began, it's clear Cataclysm is going to be huge. When you're going to roll a Worgen or a Goblin or just push your existing characters to 85, the world of Azeroth is never, ever going to be the same again.


Uldum features a very Egyptian motif – as well as Titans.

That's no puppy!

MMOZine Verdict

Drastic and graphically stunning, we can't wait for Cataclysm

HOW COMPLETE

65%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

85%

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World of Tanks

Publisher: Wargaming.net
Developer: Wargaming.net
Heritage: Massive Assault, Order of War
Link: www.worldoftanks.com
ETA: 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of World of Tanks

Tanks for the memory

We first checked out this intriguing new MMO last issue as a First Look, but somehow that just didn't seem enough space to do it justice, so back we are again in the World of Tanks. And a very good world it's shaping up to be.

The game plays very much how you'd expect it to, with hundreds (potentially) of tanks trundling slowly through a series of well-designed maps, but what's not quite so apparent until you actually get your hands on the game, is the sheer joy to be had by playing cat and mouse with a group of enemy tanks through a small town, or gathering your squadron together to power across an open plain, chasing a lone enemy tank to its doom. Maybe it's the fact that you've got a ridiculous amount of firepower sat in front of you; maybe it's that the collective slow movement of everyone in the game makes for a much more tactical battle than a standard shooter, or maybe, just maybe, it's because tanks are, y'know, cool.

Time to talk figures: World of Tanks is fought in teams of up to 30 players each, with each game lasting between five and 10 minutes. There are a total of six nations in the game (Germany, France, USA, USSR, UK and Japan) and each one is represented with between 30-45 tanks. The global map is split up into regions, with hundreds of territories. So far, so impressive.

The slow-moving tanks make for a much tactical game than a standard shooter.

Capture the Flag with tanks? Now you're talking.

World of Tanks cont.

As this is an MMO though, you'd expect there to be character development, and you'd be right. Practically every part of the tank can be upgraded, from the hull, engine, armour, turret and gun to the ammo type, radio equipment and the crew members themselves.

Wargaming.net are crowing loudly about the success of their Beta testing in Russia. Kicking off on the third of February with a whopping 30,000 requests, they have completed a staggering 325,000 battles since then, with 10 million tanks destroyed and a ear-shattering 100 million shells fired. With that sort of testing in place, we have high hopes for the finished game when it's finally released in Europe this winter.

In its first incarnation, World of Tanks will focus exclusively on tanks of the period between 1930-1960 – which covers pre-World War II times up to the Korean War – but our own personal hope is that eventually updates will include the latest tanks technology. You can even own multiple vehicles of various types, including light/medium/heavy tanks or tank destroyers, self-propelled howitzers and rocket launchers.

The variety also extends to the locations too, as you'll be given the opportunity to battle over open fields with hills and forests, villages, canyons, urban areas, deserts, Russian winter, industrial zones and also jungles. While each area is only the size of 2-3 square miles, the relative slow speed of the tanks, coupled with the short round time, means that's not really a concern.

Mention a tank-based MMO to most men of a certain age and their eyes light up – we know; we tried it – so it's all down to Wargaming.net now. If they can get the gameplay balance spot-on then there's no reason to think that this won't be one of the most fun and accessible MMOs we'll see this year.

"Mention a tank-based MMO to most men of a certain age and their eyes light up – we know; we tried it"

Take a hit and it's game over… for now.

MMOZine Verdict

Another original MMO trying something different, and we're hoping that it works

HOW COMPLETE

85%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

80%

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Full of Eastern Promise

One of China's biggest MMOs of all time is heading West

The release of TLBB is getting closer, and if you're one of the gamers not to experience the fantastic Open Beta yet (and why not?) then it's time for you to find out more about the game, as we speak exclusively to the developers.

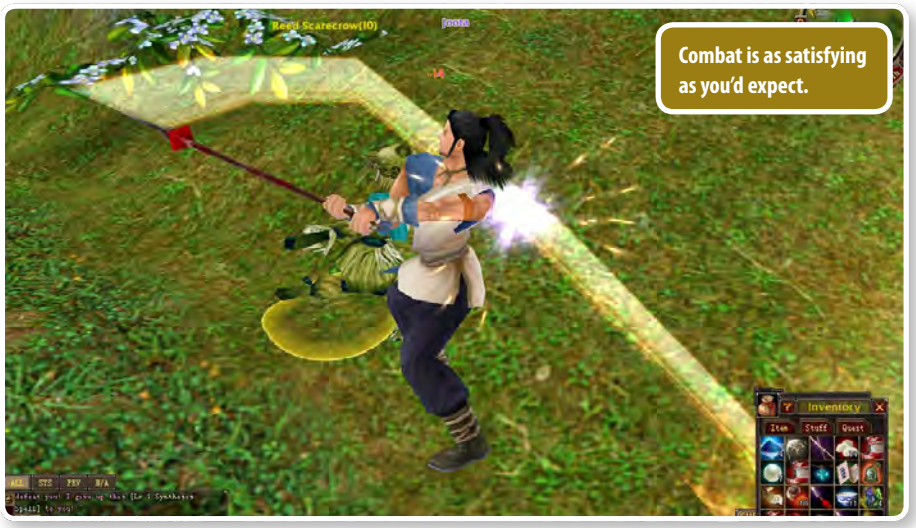
So the name… can you tell us how that come about?
In China, the book this game was based on is called Tiān Lóng Bā Bù – Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils – a famous martial arts novel written by a well-respected writer called Louis Cha. The book later spawned into several movies and also a television series, and is a well-known story among the Chinese communities.

The storyline behind TLBB is so strong and genuine, that we felt the authenticity of the original book and title would be ideal for the MMO.

Can you tell us if there will be micro transactions in the game? And, if so, how they will work.
At the moment we want to provide gamers with a free-to-play service that gives them a taste of the playability, and so there are currently no micro transactions within the game. Now's a better time than ever for people in Europe and around the world to log on to TLBB and experience the game that's had millions of players talking in China already.

What sort of in-game events have you held? And what ones can we look forward to?

"In China, the book this game was based on is called Tiān Lóng Bā Bù – Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils"



Interview continued

TLBB hosts in-game events around the clock that are enjoyed by players on a regular basis in Europe. There are events such as the 'World Competition' that adopts a last-man-standing approach and where PvP battling comes into play, as well as the 'Chess Challenge', where players can work together as a team in a PvE system that rewards handsomely. A lot of our in-game events also relate to outside rewards, such as crystal dragon eggs, T-shirts, trips and much more. For more information, players can visit the 'events' and 'news' section of the official website – http://tlbb.eu.changyou.com.

And how have you been able to avoid the grinding associated with some MMOs?

Our main focus has always been to deliver a genuine martial arts-based MMO experience to players everywhere. In Europe, the game has done exceptionally well, as it has done in the US, China and around the world. Once players log into the game and try it for themselves, they are very rarely disappointed. We encourage readers everywhere to join in the fun of TLBB in order to experience the wealth of excitement that comes with it.

Can you also tell us more about the Pets system?

In TLBB, the players' pets are their best friends. Quests and instances become slightly easier and more fun when the loyal sidekicks are summoned to fight alongside the characters.

A lot of the in-game events allow you to win real goodies.

Okay, so you can't actually fly, but this is a close second best.

Interview continued

With more than 100 pets available, players can go on Pet Island in search of the pet that suits them best. It's then up to them to capture the one they like most. As well as levelling-up the character, players can also adjust their pet's attributes, including Strength, Intelligence, Stamina, Willpower and Agility.

TLBB is in Open Beta, but when can we expect it to go public?
TLBB currently remains on the free-to-play Open Beta list, which provides players with a fully capable, fully working Chinese martial arts-based MMO on the market. We're very happy with the popularity of the server, and so it's important for us, before anything, to establish a solid foundation for the game.

> *"TLBB has a great storyline that the public love"*

How popular is the game in Asia?
TLBB has a very loyal following throughout Asia – our PCU figure alone (875,000) is testament to that. Since the release of TLBB, ChangYou has strived to develop the game further and has seen a positive effect among communities. TLBB has a great storyline that the public love, and not only does the game represent a journey for players, but its beautifully adapted landscapes, characters and features have helped TLBB become one of the top games in China. The game also offers a large and friendly community, and with more players around the world turning to TLBB, we are confident that the game will grow even further.

The lightning effects clearly show that something important is going on here.

Make a bit of extra money by selling stuff on the streets.

Do you think TLBB can be as popular in Europe, despite the fact that its style is very Eastern in look and feel?
The European communities have been very open to the game. The fact that the game delivers complete playability for our users is the main thing for us. As our American counterparts found out, the game is very liked by the Western communities.

Here in Europe we're finding the user numbers increasing on a daily basis, and so thankfully this hasn't been an issue for ChangYou in this part of the world. The game recently had a rave review online and was seen as one of the most genuine martial arts-based MMOs out there due to its storyline, look and feel.

What makes TLBB different from other MMOs?
The game has a number of features, such as an easy-to-use interface that's tested daily by millions of players. With over 100 pets, 70 mounts and nine unique classes to choose from, players have a wide variety of choices to suit their needs throughout their gaming experience.

The game is a beautifully rendered ancient Chinese world that has been depicted from the original book and therefore allows players to enjoy the different scenes, quests and instances throughout their journey of discovery. As well as a totally unique storyline, this addictive 3D MMO boasts 24/7 in-game features and events that can be enjoyed by anyone.

Publisher: ChangYou
Developer: ChangYou
Heritage: N/A
Link: http://tlbb.eu.changyou.com
ETA: TBA

Publisher: Frogster
Developer: Runewaker Entertainment
Heritage: Bounty Bay Online
Link: www.runesofmagic.com
OUT NOW

Runes of Magic – The Elder Kingdoms

"The Elder Kingdoms expands the land of Taborea even further, offering a new continent as well as upping the level cap"

Taborea gets even bigger

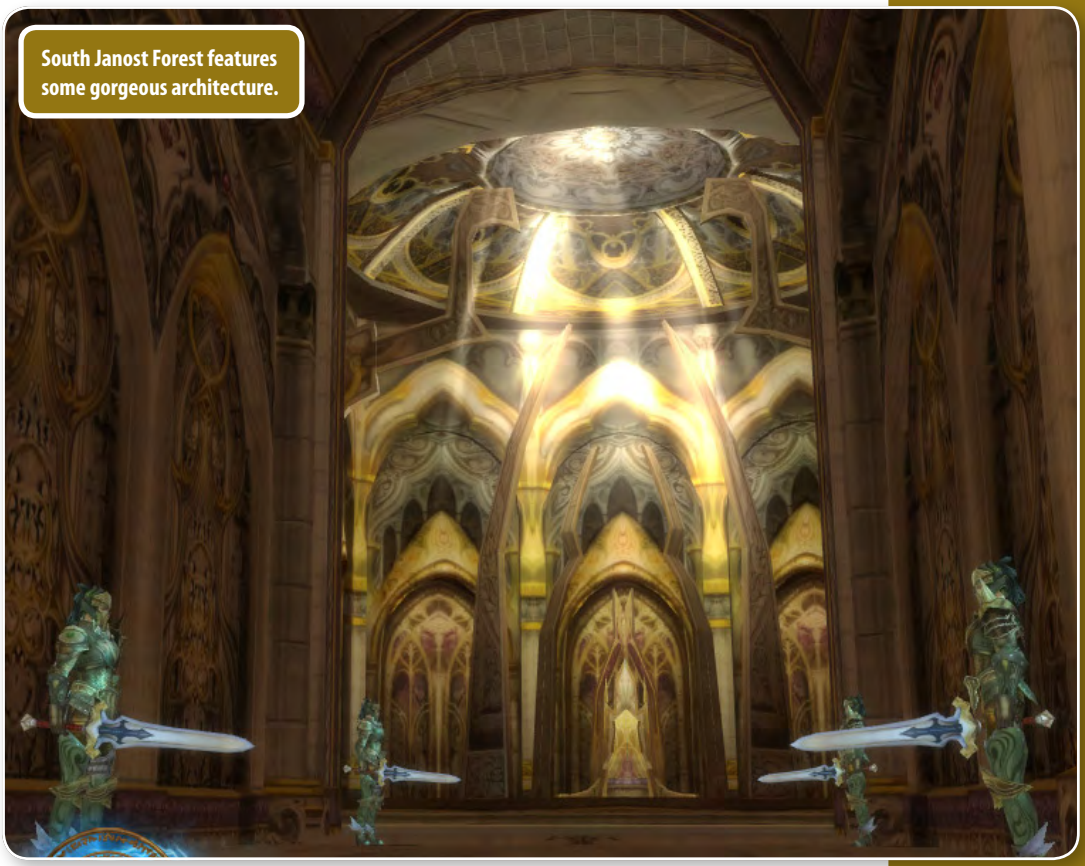
Frogster's insanely popular freemium MMO, Runes of Magic, has gone to the next level with the release of Chapter Three last month. As well as continuing to evolve the storyline, The Elder Kingdoms expands the land of Taborea even further, offering a new continent as well as upping the level cap.

It's been just over a year since Runes of Magic was unleashed on the world, and Frogster has set the bar high by making Runes of Magic both fun and also free to play. There are no subscription fees and content updates don't cost a bean, either. However, if you want to do Runes of Magic properly or don't have as much time to play, you need to use micro-transactions to gain items.

There's also a plethora of in-game competitions that players can participate in which offer massive cash prizes. The release of Chapter Three has led to a boxed copy of the game to be sold across Europe. This not only offers the game client on a disc but a host of extra features, including in-game items and a wolf companion pet that grants extra experience. So you never need to spend a penny on Runes of Magic if you don't want to but it's obvious that people do.

Chapter Two, The Elven Prophecy, focused on lore and the introduction of the Elves and the Druid and Warden classes. The Elder Kingdoms, however shifts to widening

Dalanis looks lovely but hides a dark secret.



South Janost Forest features some gorgeous architecture.

The cavalry are getting ready to explore a literal dungeon.

Denizens and abominations await you.

Runes of Magic cont.

Taborea's borders now that the threat from Demon Lord Sirloth has been neutralised. The game does this by introducing a whole new continent called Zandorya to explore, which includes plenty of zones for high-level players, including the Southern Janost Forest and the Thunderhoof Hills. These new zones feature all-new quests and NPCs

But you can't just walk to Zandorya. High-level players have to do a quest first in Antulia Volcano, and they will then be directed to a Dragon NPC who will teleport you to the new land. Sorry, lower-level players, but you're really going to have to level up before you can do some exploring. This new land is ruled by the Child King Callaway, and it's the job of players to help the young monarch control the various factions which threat to split his kingdom.

At first glance, this does seem like a chapter for end-game players, what with the increased level cap of level 58 (and soon to 60) and the new dungeon of Dalanis. Dalanis itself is underground; a huge dungeon which has only just been rediscovered. Unfortunately for players it is still occupied, and one of your first tasks is to kill Prince Maxim Erekat III – the instance's end boss – and the subjects from his horrible experiments, which include a Chimera-like creature and a robber revived from death by arcane, unnatural magic.

Of course, with this new continent it's obvious that a lot of focus is on the end-game, but lower-level players certainly have not been forgotten. From new mounts, some of which can be used by two players to a marriage system where players of the opposite sex can pledge their virtual undying love – and gain unique buffs specific to wedded bliss.

There's a big focus on expanding the foundations laid in the previous chapters, improvements which make the game feel more complete and rounded, such as the public encounters system where players

MONSTER MENAGERIE

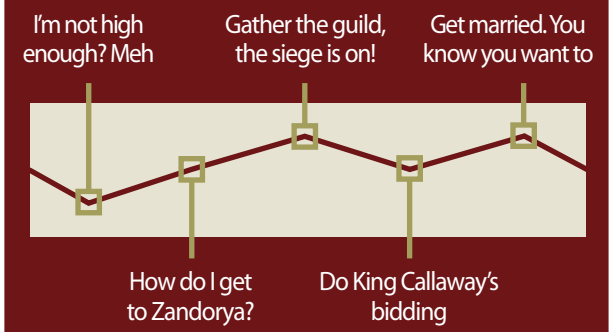
The Elder Kingdoms' new zones feature a host of monsters and other killable creatures for you to chase and dispatch

BEHEMOTH **INCY WINCY** **MILASSO FOREST**

Never has a beast been so rightly named… he's huge!

Guilds can look forward to new features and buildings.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life


I'm not high enough? Meh
Gather the guild, the siege is on!
Get married. You know you want to
How do I get to Zandorya?
Do King Callaway's bidding

Runes of Magic cont.

fight against AI-controlled opponents. There's a new battlefield on offer in the form of the Tyrefen Mountain Range. And, for those looking for something really different, there are siege wars which not only see guild playing against guild, but also have some awesome buildings and vehicles to be created as well.

Runes of Magic has achieved a lot since it launched in March 2009 and is no longer just a game but a franchise. It has demonstrated that the freemium model of MMO gaming works well but also how social networking and in-game contests can be used to create hype. The first two chapters of the game created a sound base and a fascinating mythology, but now The Elder Kingdoms does a fantastic job of building on those solid foundations.

There's so much content in this latest chapter – with more yet to come in subsequent, smaller patches – that it feels more like an expansion of its own right rather than just an update. Indeed, it seems hard to believe all this is completely free, when some games out there charge up to £20 a month for so much less content. But Runes of Magic seems to have gotten the balance right between free and premium, even more so as we step into the land of Zandorya for the first time. ●

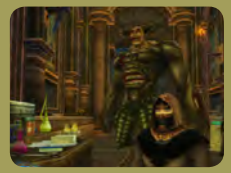
MMOZine Verdict

Runes of Magic continues to impress

- ✓ A new land to explore
- ✓ Higher level cap
- ✗ No new classes

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game, one step at a time…



1 HOUR
You can start off the game by cleaning out the dungeon of Dalanis.

3 HOURS
Then, when you're feeling a bit braver, why not try out a siege war?

7 HOURS
Explore Southern Janost Forest, which should keep you busy for a while.

10 HOURS
Grab a pint in Thunderhoof Hills, but be careful not to spill anyones' drink.

20 HOURS
Marvel as you do a little sightseeing around the beauty that is Taborea.

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EVE TYRANNIS

Publisher: CCP Games
Developer: CCP Games
Heritage: None
Link: www.eveonline.com
OUT NOW

EVE Online: Tyrannis

CCP dip their toes in the waters of planets

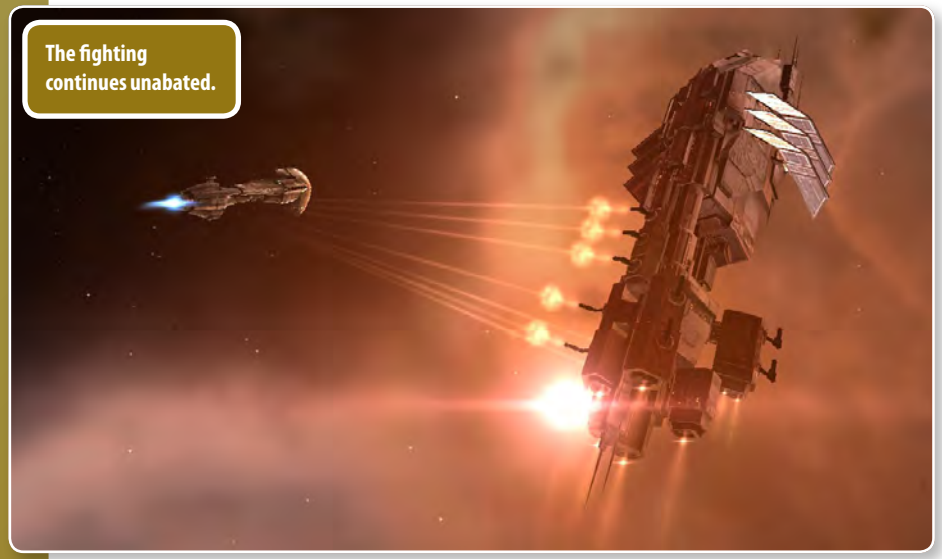
More than seven years since the original game launched, during which time players could only fight around and fly through EVE's thousands of planets, CCP have at last opened them up for business. Being the most populous- and resource-rich centres in the galaxy, and the very hubs around which wars should be fought, should make the central feature of the Tyrannis expansion, Planetary Interaction, something more than a gesture. Being able to plonk down resource extractors to pull the basest building blocks from each world should be game-changing stuff. But it isn't. At least, not yet.

As they have with most EVE add-ons, CCP have taken a cautious approach with Tyrannis, which is perhaps prudent when introducing game-changing mechanics. But this add-on lacks the bullish confidence that CCP have usually displayed when going about their business. It feels like they're not quite sure about Planetary Interaction. As a consequence, players might not feel sure either. After spending a couple of hours setting up a low-level factory chain – made needlessly complex by the UI – and, working out what the meagre in-game earnings might be from selling your components, you might wonder what the point of the process is. Automating revenue streams is all well and good, but if it takes months to break even then why bother?

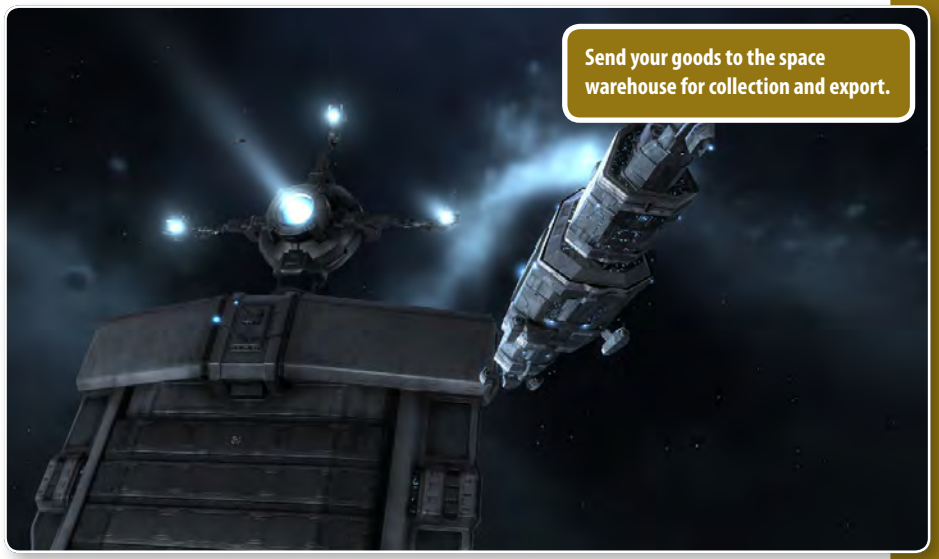
But this is EVE we're talking about, where the wary step back and entrepreneurs find a way to make billions from their caution. On the scale of alliances, Tyrannis could serve to free thousands of players from the drudgery of starbase management. The fear is that they'd be swapping out one form of drudgery for another.

"As they have with most EVE add-ons, CCP have taken a cautious approach with Tyrannis"

It's a tough call now but Tyrannis will undoubtedly shine – EVE expansions always do when they



The fighting continues unabated.



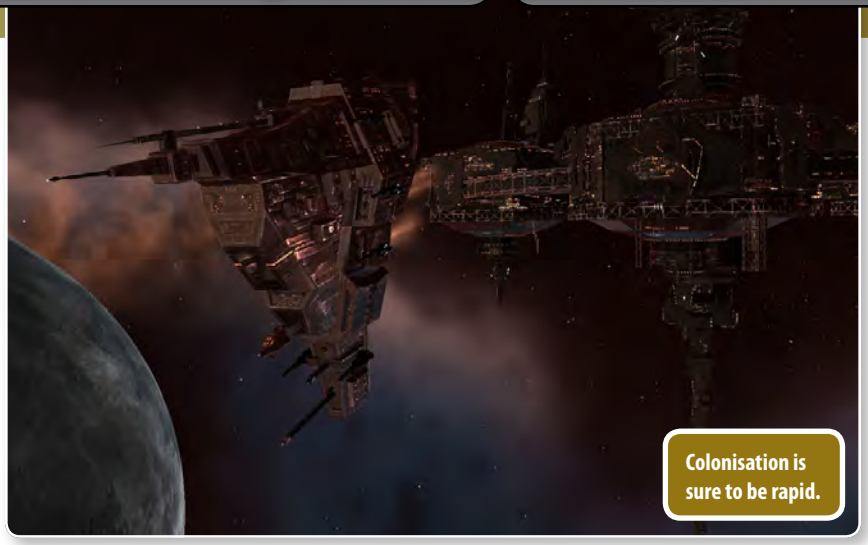
Send your goods to the space warehouse for collection and export.

EVE Online continued

are superseded. Dominion only makes sense now that Tyrannis is here, so it's likely that Tyrannis will be lauded when 1.5 comes our way in the winter

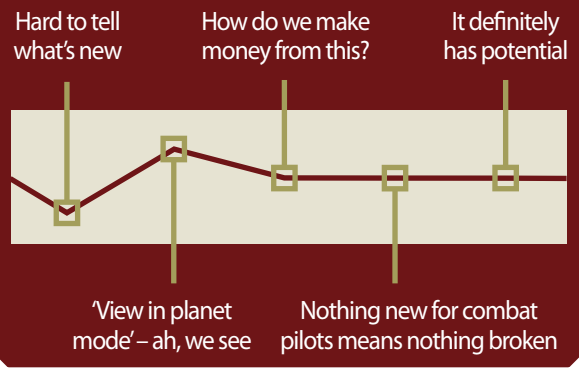
But there is the feeling of an opportunity missed. After introducing wormholes in 2009 and faction warfare in 2008, CCP's new frontier feels cold and empty. Dominion almost hinted at life, adding scale to the worlds with new planet textures, then Tyrannis comes along to remind you that all that matters in New Eden are the players. What of the pretence of the living universe? Where are those teeming billions of people we read so much about?

The main reason Tyrannis feels dry and thin is because apart from the headline feature, there really isn't anything else in it. If you're a pirate or PVP-er, you'll probably still be wondering when the expansion is coming out. Not that we're saying this is the worst EVE add-on, but it's easily the flimsiest. With so many other projects going on in Iceland (Dust 514, mild civil disobedience, World of Darkness, stoking a volcano), CCP were never going to be able to keep up what has been a unyielding breakneck pace. EVE has come a miraculously long way in seven years after all, so maybe CCP should be allowed to take their foot off the gas once in a while.



Colonisation is sure to be rapid.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life


Hard to tell what's new
How do we make money from this?
It definitely has potential
'View in planet mode' – ah, we see
Nothing new for combat pilots means nothing broken

Of course, like all expansions Tyrannis is free, and for that reason alone it's impossible to criticise it when it adds far more to the game and takes nothing away. That it adds more in the way of potential than anything substantial is always par for the course with new EVE add-ons and, to be honest, we probably wouldn't have it any other way.

SPACE BOOK

There is one big feature that actually isn't strictly part of Tyrannis. It's called EVEgate and it's stage one in what will eventually be a kind of web-based Facebook for EVE players. Currently in Beta, EVEgate allows you to check and send EVEmail, make friends, set up contacts lists and access a calendar on which corp buddies can plan events. The calendar is a very useful feature, and being able to access in-game mail is proving very popular, but the service will need to evolve beyond being a kind of 'Spacebook Lite' if it's going to be the social out-of-game hub that players both want and also deserve.

Planetary Interaction is peaceful PvP, for now.

MMOZine Verdict

An interesting experiment

- ✓ Planets are open for exploitation
- ✓ The future looks better than ever
- ✗ Off-world developments practically non-existent

Publisher: NCsoft
Developer: NCsoft
Heritage: Lineage II, Guild Wars, Guild Wars II
Link: www.aiononline.com
OUT NOW

Aion 1.9

Small, but perfectly formed… Aion gets updated

A new range of Skills cover all the classes.

So patch 1.9 is finally live on European servers, and if you've already downloaded it (and successfully, as there were quite a few 'teething troubles'. Ahem) then you're probably already enjoying it. But what of the many of you who haven't? Either you don't have the game, have it but haven't gotten round to it, or you're now bored with the game and, frankly, can't be bothered. Is the 1.9 patch enough to bring back gamers back? Time to find out…

Firstly, this update doesn't probably offer as new quests as you might hope for. 1.9 is more about tweaking what is already there rather than anything drastic. Anyone looking for a more radical update doesn't have to wait too long though, as 2.0 is to be released at the end of the summer.

Armfusion

One of the biggest additions is a new system call Armfusion, which allows you to combine two-handed weapons. This adds (among other things) 10 per cent Attack Power and 10 per cent Magic Boosting Power.

Group Search

Hit Shift and V and you'll bring up a new window giving you the option to find others for group quests. You also now have the ability to move the new Quickbar anywhere on the screen.

New Skills

A range of 15 new skills have been added across the whole range of classes, while over 20 existing ones have been improved.

Quests

New Daily Quests have been added, so that when you join certain factions, you'll be able to undertake a new quest every day. There have also been new quests added in various areas, too.

And that's just the start of it. It's clear that NCsoft are putting a lot of thought into the future of Aion, and 1.9 (and the imminent 2.0) is clearly a step in the right direction for the game. ●

You can now fuse two-handed weapons.

MMOZine Verdict

A fine minor update to keep us busy until 2.0 appears

- ✓ Improvements across the board
- ✓ Makes the game more accessible
- ✗ More new quests would've been nice

In MMOZine Issue 22

APB

One of the most eagerly awaited MMOs of the last couple of years is about to be released. Come back next month for our review and exclusive interview

PLUS!

LEGO Universe, Global Agenda, Fallen Earth, Black Prophecy, Mortal Online

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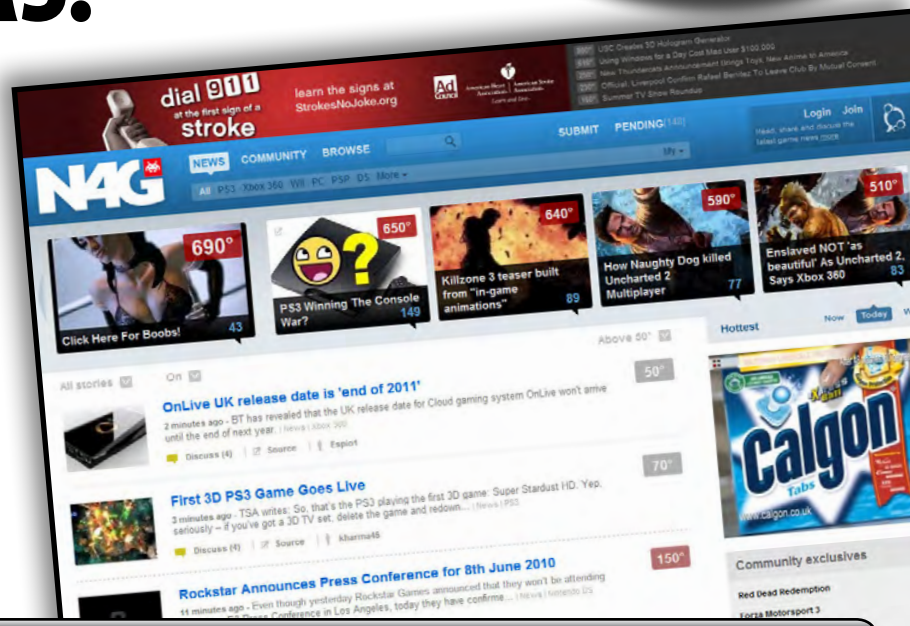
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